

8 December, International Dignified Menstruation Day

The taboos, stigma, restrictions and discrimination associated with menstruation is a form of sexual and gender based violence. Irrespective of class, caste, religion, region, it is practicing across globe at various forms and degrees. The CEDAW's (article 1-16), ICPD, and many international human right instruments are validate this facts.

By considering the goal of 16 days activism, RPF, GSCDM and its partners initiated the International Dignified Menstruation day since 2019.

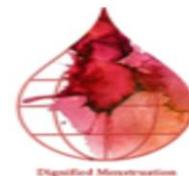
The MoWCSC also gave the celebration its endorsement. There are other reasons, too, why it is relevant to consider 8 December, the 14th day of the 16 Days of Activism as International Dignified Menstruation Day. Those reasons follow (Radha Paudel Foundation, 2020).

A. From the perspective of the global agenda

1. Nine of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are directly related to dignified menstruation. In fact, dignified menstruation is a pre-condition for achieving 'leave no one behind'. Without having a dialogue about dignified menstruation, it is not possible to achieve education for all or economic empowerment or prevent child marriage.
2. The UN considers that sexual and gender-based violence embraces all acts against person's will. Menstruators forced to endure taboos, stigma, restrictions and discrimination are not acting as per their wishes. Having a dialogue on dignified menstruation is one of the key tools to preventing sexual and gender-based violence by reconstructing and shaping power from childhood.
3. Points 1 and 2 suggest that any form of menstrual discrimination is sexual and gender-based violence. Often, menstrual practices have a cause-effect relationship with various types of sexual and gender-based violence like sexual abuse, rape and child marriage.
4. December has been the month of human rights since 1948. All menstruators deserve dignity throughout their life cycle. The 8th of December, the 14th day of the 16 Days of Activism is a good day to remember that fact.



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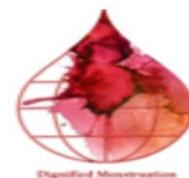
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B. From the perspective of the national context

1. Many articles in Nepal's Constitution of 2015 are directly and indirectly related to dignity during menstruation, including the ten fundamental rights (Nepal Law Commission, 2015): the right to dignity (Article 16), right to freedom (Article 17), right to equality (Article 18), right to non-discrimination (Article 24), right to safe environment (Article 30), right to education (Article 31), right to health (Article 35), right to food (Article 36), right to shelter (Article 37), right to women's rights (Article 38). Whether a menstruator follows one or many restrictions, her constitutional rights will be violated in many ways.
2. The MoWCSC of Nepal promulgated the Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act in 2009 to prevent and address cases of sexual and gender based violence (Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, 2009). According to this law, the taboos, stigmas, restrictions and discrimination regards to menstruation should account as sexual and gender based violence. Because it considered any harmful act regards to sexual, physical, economical, and political, considered violence.
3. Over the last four years (2016-2020), 85 percent of the total cases of sexual and gender-based violence registered with the police were perpetrated by men the victims knew, whether from their families or workplaces. This data reveals that the home is the most common unsafe place for girls and women. Here, the relationship between the silence and ignorance around menstruation and power construction and socialization from childhood are significantly connected. Thus, in order to reconstruct power and redefine gender norms, it is crucial to acknowledge menstruation with dignity in Nepal and beyond (Matrika Dahal, 2020).
4. Nepal has been working on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) since 2000 (Family Health Division, 2000). Explicit discussion of menstruation is missing, and menstruation is not among the nine independent elements of SRHR despite the fact that menstruation is the entry point for each of those elements. For instance, the rate of unsafe abortion is higher than the rate of safe abortion in Nepal because of stigma. Having public dialogue on dignified menstruation would robust the confidence of menstruators to decide about their bodies.



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5. The government of Nepal has promised to implement more than a dozen international human right instruments, and menstruation is a crucial element for it to fulfill its commitment. Without understanding the cause-and effect-relationship between menstrual practice and child marriage, ending that practice is impossible even by 2030. Child marriage is deeply entrenched due to the power construction between women and girl and men and boys at home and the different socialization processes of the genders, wherein menstruation plays an important role.
6. The variety of menstruation-related practices are observed across the country and beyond. Like the practices themselves, their impacts are both visible and invisible. Practices in some parts of West Nepal have been internationalized by the media and everyone has focused on them, whereas practices in the East and in the capital city are invisible and rarely discussed. But even in the latter places, menstruators live in dehumanised conditions as they are seen as impure due to menstruation. In order to address all practices around menstruation, even the invisible, a visible campaign on dignified menstruation is relevant and urgent (Paudel, A Glance of Madhesh Women Empowerment, Parsa in Nepal, 2016).
7. The concept of dignified menstruation is a huge and comprehensive concept. This is a new approach for the world, one in which menstruation is considered to be complex and multifaceted natural phenomena. In order to increase momentum toward the acknowledgement and addressing of the social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental issues associated with menstruation, having a dedicated day for dignified menstruation is important.



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